

JUN 28 1991

URFO:DLJ

In Reply Refer To:

Report No. 40-8914/91-02

Hecla Mining Company
6500 Mineral Drive
Box C-8000
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83814-1931

Gentlemen:

This refers to the special unannounced inspection conducted by Ms. D. L. Jacoby and Mr. R. O. Gonzales of this office on June 18, 1991, of the activities authorized by NRC Source Material License SUA-1482 and to the discussion of our findings held by the inspectors with a member of your staff on June 27, 1991. The enclosed NRC Inspection Report 40-8914/91-02 documents this inspection.

The inspection was an examination of the construction activities conducted under the license as they relate to the approved reclamation plan and to compliance with the Commission's rules and regulations, and the conditions of the license. The inspection consisted of selective examination of procedures, interviews of personnel, and observations by the inspectors.

The inspection identified two concerns related to contamination control that are considered unresolved items. Additional information to resolve these items must be submitted within 30 days of the date of this letter. It appears, based on the inspectors' observations, that other reclamation activities are being adequately performed.

The responses directed by this letter are not subject to the clearance procedures of the Office of Management and Budget as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980, PL 96-511.

In accordance with 10 CFR 2.790 of the Commission's regulations, a copy of this letter and the enclosed inspection report will be placed in the NRC's Public Document Room.

PM:URFO
DJacoby/v
06/18/91

PM:URFO
RGonzales
06/20/91

DD:URFO
EHawkins
06/25/91

D:URFO:RIVE
JEHall
06/28/91

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Hecla Mining Company

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JUN 28 1991

Should you have any questions concerning this letter, we will be pleased to discuss them with you.

Sincerely,

EFH

[Handwritten signature]

Ramon E. Hall
Director

Enclosure:

Appendix A - NRC Inspection Report 40-8914/91-02

cc:

B. Garcia, RCPD, NM
E. Montoya, NMED

bcc:

LFMB

PDR

Suspense File

URFO r/f

ABBeach, RIV

GSanborn, RIV

RITS Operator

RSTS Operator

NMIS

LYandell

RDMartin

RWise

LShea, RM/ALF (AR-2015)

DMB (IE-07)

LLUR Branch, LLWM

DJacoby

RGonzales

8914/91-02/DLJ/91/06/25/INSP

APPENDIX A

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

REGION IV

URANIUM RECOVERY FIELD OFFICE

NRC Inspection Report: 40-8914/91-02
Docket: 40-8914

License: SUA-1482

Licensee: Hecla Mining Company
6500 Mineral Drive
Box C-8000
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83814-1931

Facility: Johnny M Mine

Inspection At: McKinley County, New Mexico

Inspection Conducted: June 18, 1991

Inspectors:

Dawn L. Jacoby
Dawn L. Jacoby, Team Leader

6/28/91
Date

Raymond O. Gonzales
Raymond O. Gonzales, Project Manager

6/28/91
Date

Accompanied by: E. Brummett, Project Manager, Uranium Recovery
Branch, Division of Low Level Waste Management,
NMSS

Approved:

Ramon E. Hall
for Ramon E. Hall, Director

6/28/91
Date

Inspection Summary

Inspection conducted on June 18, 1991 (Report No. 40-8914/91-02).

Areas Inspected: Special inspection of reclamation construction activities at the Johnny M Mine site. The inspection included independent inspection of surface cleanup operations.

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Results: In the area inspected, no violations or deviations were identified. Two unresolved items were identified in the area of contamination control.

The inspectors concluded that the cleanup activities were being conducted in accordance with the approved plan.

DETAILS1. Persons Contacted

B. Berry, Supervisor, Neilson Construction
L. Hersloff, Radiant Energy Management
*L. Drew, Manager, Environmental Affairs, Hecla Mining Company

*Denotes those participating in the exit interview conducted by telephone June 27, 1991.

2. Licensee Action on Previous Inspection Findings

(Closed) Violation (40-8914/87-001). Failure of the licensee to post areas containing radioactive material. The inspectors noted that the entrance to the site was conspicuously posted.

3. Radioactive Waste Management

An inspection was made of the cleanup activities being conducted at the site in accordance with License Condition No. 11 of Source Material License SUA-1482. Access to the site was through a posted gate to the north injection area where a construction trailer and numerous vehicles were parked. No construction activities were observed in the north injection site. The area is level with the exception of a pile of loose material located in the vicinity of the construction trailer.

Cleanup activities were in progress at the south injection area where representatives of Neilson Construction and Radiant Energy Management (REM) were observed. The contaminated areas are being cleaned by scraping the material with a grader. The depth and extent of grading is directed by a representative of REM. The REM representative surveyed for gamma activity after each pass by the grader. If the soil did not meet the predetermined cleanup limit, the representative had the grader make an additional pass. Confirmatory spot checks by the inspectors, using REM equipment, were made of cleaned areas. They confirmed that the remaining soil met the predefined limit.

The accumulated contaminated material was picked up and relocated to a stockpile by scraper. A front end loader then transferred the material to end-dump trucks from the stockpile. The trucks are not loaded to capacity due to the May 17, 1991, rollover accident, previously reported to the NRC by the licensee.

The loaded trucks were driven forward several hundred feet, where the driver got out of the cab, climbed into the truck bed, and covered the tailings with a tarp. At this point, an individual appeared to be monitoring trucking activities; however, the inspectors did not observe a survey instrument in the immediate area and did not observe any surveying of the trucks prior to leaving the restricted area. The individual performing the monitoring was observed instructing a truck driver to get

his TLD badge from the truck cab and wear it prior to pulling the tarp over the contaminated material. Placards were not observed on the trucks enroute to the disposal area.

The inspectors had previously interviewed five truck drivers at Quivira's Ambrosia Lake Mill where the contaminated material is being trucked for disposal in Quivira's Pond 2. At Quivira, the drivers were observed walking in the contaminated material to remove the tarps prior to dumping. Of the five drivers interviewed, the first four did not have TLD badges after climbing out of the truck bed. One driver indicated that he would not wear the TLD because he could not afford Hecla's policy of requiring him to replace the TLD if lost. The other three drivers retrieved their TLD's from the truck cabs and put them on when questioned. This policy was discussed with Ms. Hersloff, REM, at the Johnny M site.

Ms. Hersloff indicated that the north injection area met cleanup standards except for the stockpiled material that had been observed by the inspectors. Mr. Berry indicated that approximately 37,000 cubic yards of material had been removed from the north and south sites and estimated that an additional 7000 cubic yards would be removed prior to the estimated completion date of June 24, 1991.

Although the cleanup activities at the site may be contrary to the regulations for transportation of contaminated material, the inspectors could not pursue the issue due to the lack of a designated representative of the licensee at the site. Therefore, appropriate transportation of the contaminated material will be considered an unresolved item requiring additional information to ascertain whether or not the matter is acceptable, a violation, or a deviation (40-8914/9102-01). The licensee must submit the calculations demonstrating that the material was exempt under 10 CFR 71.10.

Personal surveys were not required of the inspectors prior to leaving the restricted area. The reasoning behind not requiring personal surveys in addition to the observed attitude of the truck drivers toward the TLDs will also be considered an unresolved item that will require more information to ascertain whether or not the matter is acceptable, a violation, or a deviation. The licensee should submit the calculations and supporting information to indicate that personal surveying was not necessary, or indicate why it was not required, in addition to discussing how the TLD replacement policy represents ALARA philosophy (40-8914/9102-02).

No violations or deviations were identified by the inspectors.

4. Exit Interview

The inspectors conducted an exit interview by telephone with Mr. Larry Drew of Hecla Mining on June 27, 1991, to discuss inspection findings. The inspectors summarized the scope and findings of the inspection.